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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes two joint sessions held by the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education to hear testimony on issues related to parent participation in American Indian education. Issues and problems were in the areas of: (1) the importance of parent involvement for student achievement; (2) the need to empower parents who are intimidated by the school system; (3) parent responsibility for teaching culture; (4) institutional barriers to parent involvement, including failure of the school system to be aware of cultural factors or family situations; (5) insufficient funding for community liaison; (6) the need for parent training; (7) racism and lack of cultural sensitivity in the curriculum; and (8) the need for parent and community advocacy to ensure the teaching of Native culture and languages. Also discussed were effective programs and strategies for involving parents, including the development of trust between parents and school; outreach into the community by administrators and teachers; a home-school festival for informal contact between parents and teachers; welcoming parents into the classroom; recreational or cultural activities as an element of parent meetings or school sponsored family events; newsletters; and school-provided transportation. (SV)

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INAR/NACIE Joint Issues Sessions
NIEA 22nd Annual Conference - San Diego, California
October 16, 1990

"Parental Involvement"

RC 018552

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INAR/NACIE Joint Issue Sessions
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Summary: "Parental Involvement"

The first session on parental involvement was co-hosted by INAR Task Force Co-Chair Terrel Bell and NACIE Council member Jim Shore. The second session on this issue was co-hosted by INAR Task Force member Byron Fullerton and NACIE Council member Omar Lane. The following issues, recommendations, and exemplary programs were discussed:

I. Recognizing the Need

The Importance of Parent Empowerment

- A key to student achievement is to get parents involved in the education of their children. Even parents who don't know a lot about the subject matter can provide a good place for their children to do homework, reserve time for it, and have an opportunity for their children to study at home. Parents can talk about school and schoolwork with their children on a regular basis, encourage them, motivate them, and shape their attitudes about school and learning. In this process, parents will become closer to their children and have a better working relationship with them.

- I would like to distinguish between parent involvement and parent support. Parent involvement requires parents to be involved as committee members, policymakers, Title V advisors, and even tutors. On the other hand, parent support programs such as Family Math and Family Science build upon what parents can do for a child. Because our parents haven't come through the system with the kind of skills that they need in terms of parenting, we haven't been very good at giving them concrete things they can do with their children. When you actually get parents and children together having fun around a content area like Family Math or Family Science, you start breaking down some of the barriers and fears that parents grew up with. They want to be there for their children but nobody has ever shown them how to in very concrete, enjoyable, supportive kinds of ways.

- The BIA has had a record of taking our Indian children away from their communities and sending them to schools 100 miles away. That was a deliberate effort on the governments' part to assimilate and indoctrinate these children. We need to turn this around and let the family and parents assume more responsibility.

- Educators across the nation seem to be using parental choice as a front or a reason to allow students to go to schools of their choice, but many times those students will go to no less than two schools in a year. We have three BIA schools within a radius of 50 miles that are surrounded by a public school system and we have kids leaving our school within the first three months to go elsewhere. However, they end up coming back to our school because it is close to their home and their community. We end up receiving those kids back in late March

or April, and we don't know if we should promote them. I agree that parents should have a choice of where to send their children, but the problem is that the students are the ones making those decisions. We need to form a partnership with parents so they trust the schools and don't leave the choices up to their children.

A Policy Context

- Changes for parents and schools must occur at the policy level. I have been involved in lawsuits where parents present horrible things that are going on, but if they sue, all they win is a declaration that says the horrible thing must stop. However, they still have to figure out what to do and what kinds of curriculum and materials are going to replace the problem material. And this must all happen in the context of a changing, hostile staff. There really needs to be an ongoing policy basis for doing that.

Current Lack of Parental Involvement

- On many Indian reservations, parental involvement starts during Head Start but deteriorates by the end of middle school. However, those are very crucial times when our parents really need to give support and assistance to the youth who are facing adolescence.

- I am a parent and was involved in Head Start because of the parent involvement component written into that program. However, when our son went into kindergarten, our involvement tailed off. I don't know if that was because we were intimidated by the teachers, if we were somehow discouraged from participating, or if we were made not to feel welcome.

Parental Responsibility for Teaching the Culture

- I was wondering about parents and how much they should participate in school. I know that a lot of people believe schools should teach Native American culture, but I think that should begin at home. When students go to school, they should already have a very strong understanding of their culture and heritage. We used to take our kids to the supermarket have them pick out the different foods that the Indians contributed to society. We also taught them the old legends and stories. Maybe our family is different because we have a functional family with parents and grandparents. They took an avid interest in the culture and read about the Indians in Mexico. This summer we went to the desert where there was a ball court and my kids determined that the Indians had calculated the parabolic reflex of this court. They had read in National Geographic about how the Indians did that so they could stand on two temples and whisper and hear each other's communication. Culture and heritage should come from the home so that when they go to school they have a better understanding of their own self.

II. **Suggestions for Encouraging Parental Involvement**

Establishing Trust

- Based on my experience working with Indian families from one of the Pueblo communities in New Mexico, I know that getting parents involved takes time--it is not something that will happen overnight. Once parents trust you, know you, and know what you think, it is easier for them to decide to attend parent meetings. I work directly with many of the parents in the Pueblo community. In the beginning there were parent meetings that sometimes no parents, or only one parent attended, but I kept going back. Once I was able to establish trust and a good relationship, parental involvement increased.

- In developing relationships with parents, schools may initially have to deal with considerations that are different from their original goals. Schools need to listen to what parents are thinking rather than only following their own agenda, because what concerns parents at a particular time might be different from what schools think should concern them. However, if schools first address what concerns parents, even if it seems irrelevant, then parents will be ready to move on to other items and that is when schools can make their own suggestions.

- We need to involve parents by asking for their opinions and having them analyze what previously has and has not worked, and brainstorm solutions. In my work with parents as a community development counselor, this approach has helped me succeed. Instead of me talking to them, I try to elicit their input by asking, "What do you think? What has worked and what has not worked? Why hasn't it worked and what are some possible solutions?" Once parents realize that they have solutions within themselves and within their communities, they don't need to go to outside sources as much as they might have in the beginning. Many times solutions are right there within the communities themselves and it just takes time for parents to realize that they have tried something that works. Once they realize that many things are possible, they start to feel good about themselves.

The Importance of Outreach

- The more administrators, teachers, and parents go out into the community, the more parents will become involved. Our district is in central Phoenix where 90 percent of our people are below poverty level. We are starting to get more parents involved simply because we have some parents who go door-to-door to talk to other parents. Title V and Johnson O'Malley staff should contact the parents directly. There are not many educated Indians or qualified staff, and they don't have much time available, but to really make a difference, we need to actually go into homes and talk with parents. We need to keep letting them know that the schools are going to support them and help them as much as possible. I see some of these parents start to come out and check on their children, or visit the school. If our educators have such expertise, and they are good speakers and dynamic people, they should visit the homes more often rather than staying in their offices.

- As a principal, I want my teachers to get out into the homes and visit with the parents. You really don't know how to meet a child's needs unless you know where he or she is coming

from. However, when I announced that I expected every teacher to at least make one home visit, they shied away from it. I think we need to do more of those kinds of things because parents think that they are not accepted by the schools. The parents we have now are people who have gone through strict BIA boarding schools that did not allow the students to speak their own language. These parents feel abused by the system and feel they have no choice but to send their own kids there. They think that their kids are experiencing the same things. These parents are intimidated by the system because of their own experiences. To overcome the intimidation, we need to go into their homes and let them know that we accept their lifestyle, and therefore, we will surely accept their children.

At my school, in addition to requiring teachers to go out and meet the parents, I have brought the adult education that used to be held at our community center right into my school. The whole effort is to get more parents familiar with and involved in the school. We will also focus on a specific type of training to develop our parent group as a working functional parent group, rather than just a general parent assembly.

III. Barriers to Parental Involvement

Institutional Factors

- We can all pretend that there is a wonderful partnership between schools and parents, but there is not. When you come in with a problem, you can bet that the institutional response is that your child has been a problem. Then they start focusing in on your child because this is how many institutions protect themselves. If you are educated and know how the system works, you can respond to that. If you are not, the school shuts the door and pegs you and your child as troublemakers. I think it's asking a lot to expect parents, who aren't comfortable in this foreign setting anyway, to go in there and assert themselves and demand change.

- Often we think in negative terms about parents coming to school and being involved. When parents come to school, you wonder why they are there. Are they there because a child is in trouble? Are they there because they are upset and angry with the school or the teacher?

- We, as parents, don't feel welcome in public schools. In fact, when I go to schools, it's always because my child was not listening or some small reason, and I'm sure there are bigger problems faced by other parents.

- I regret to say that the public school system has been abusive to my children physically and emotionally. I've tried to work with the school system, and I've talked to many other Indian parents who have tried to work with them. Most of the time when they ask you to work with them, it is regarding a discipline problem. Sometimes a death in the family occurs, and my children have to be out two or three days, and they are punished for supporting their family and its values. Regarding physical abuse, my daughter recently broke her wrist. I sent a note to school and told the teacher that she was not to write. I didn't realize until three weeks later that the teacher made her rewrite another paper with her right hand, the one that was broken. Finally, I took a doctor there and even then the teacher was hollering

at us. As a last resort I took my daughter out of school and that really did a lot of emotional damage to her. Now what I have to do is rebuild again what the teacher has torn down.

- I went to visit Chemawa with my mother because my grandmother had gone there. We walked into that place and the secretarial area was built up at least a foot, maybe two feet, off the floor from the reception area so that when the secretary came up and talked to us, she looked down over this counter. And my mother, this adult person whom I always thought of as being forward, could not talk. That, I think, is a trained, learned response. When schools are all designed that way, how do you expect Indian people to come in, take control, and develop policies and curriculum? There are horrible breakdowns in communities that need to be regenerated.

- As a parent, I really resent homework. My kids are in school five to seven hours a day. How come when they come home I have to spend a half hour to an hour with each child going over homework? And not only that, if I don't sign off, my children will be punished and will not receive credit for their homework. I do agree that if a parent is involved, the child is going to do fine. But if a parent is not involved and you set up systems to attempt to generate parental involvement without responding to the realities of the community, you are going to get people who cannot comply with your strategies because they come from dysfunctional families or from families that are not educated in the institutional sense. Consequently, you get children who are failing not because they can't do the work in school, but because they're not bringing back signed papers from their parents. Maybe they live with other family members or with their brothers or sisters, or their parents are out working or abusing alcohol or drugs. You doom that child to failure by imposing strategies that don't respond to the realities of what the child needs to deal with.

- My children are in school from five to seven days a week. If the schools cannot teach a kid to read in that time, then after I get off work I have to teach them. So what you mean by parental involvement is something that concerns me because what you are really talking about is blaming parents for the failures of not just Bureau schools, but all schools, and I object strenuously to that.

- There needs to be a certain perspective when talking about training for Indian parents. If you want input on curriculum, you need to teach parents what curriculum means and how it is applied in the classroom. Parents also need training in order that families and community systems can be rebuilt and strengthened on the basis of love, affection, and support. It really offends me to have people say we need parental involvement and our problems exist because parents are not involved. For centuries this country has implemented programs through the educational system that were designed specifically to destroy those systems that they now say we need in order to turn around our horrible problems.

- Many of our Title V programs either do not have sufficient funding for a community liaison person at all, or district employees are coerced to conform to the system to keep their jobs. I suggest that Impact Aid and Title V statutes require community liaison persons who are members of the Indian community to act as advocates for Indian families. It should be clear that their role is one of advocacy and trying to keep the kids in school.

Parental Factors

- Sometimes parents fail to provide emotional support for their children. When I ask students what they would really like from their parents, many say love. This includes both emotional support and social support. If parents could provide love, I think their children could go a little bit further and parents need to understand that. They can buy school supplies or even a car for their children, but they need to give that emotional support. The State of New Mexico sponsored a conference several years ago in Santa Fe and there was a dialogue between the Elders and the younger generation. One Elder stood up and asked what the younger generation wanted from them. A panel of students responded that they wanted love, hugs, and kisses. This is what kids are looking for. I am not suggesting we should overwhelm the children with love and spoil them, but there is a correct guidance that a parent could give a child.

- Some children are being taken care of by their grandparents because their parents are out working or looking for jobs. It is hard for old people to be involved with education because they themselves are not educated and don't understand the system.

IV. Parent Projects That Work

School Initiated Efforts

- The Mesa Public Schools (AZ) have gotten parents involved and feeling comfortable with principals and teachers through a Hemako Govk'cuth, or home-school festival. This is held at the beginning of each year to bring the school staff out into the community to meet people on their own turf. Within the last two years this has been successful in bringing our parents out to participate. It is organized like a carnival festival where schools and tribal youth programs set up booths, hand out information, and speak with parents and teachers on an informal basis. In addition to the booths, the schools have worked with the students to provide some type of presentation, and a meal in the evening. The first year of the festival 150 parents attended. The next year parental attendance was up to 450.

- The White Mountain Apache reservation has established a regular series of parent/teacher conferences. Every nine weeks the school is recessed half a day and conferences are held from 1:30 in the afternoon until 6:00 in the evening. All of the parents are welcome to come into their child's classroom to discuss their child's situation and go through the grading system. The parent has a chance to be involved with the school and to understand their child's placement. Furthermore, parents receive their child's report card at these conferences. Parent involvement becomes strong at those meetings, and pretty soon they start influencing different areas. Parents are also involved through the parent policy council, parent advisory committee, and parent/teacher visitation in which all the parents at all levels, kindergarten through high school, have a chance to experience their children's classrooms.

Because parents like to get involved in a little recreation, we always have an activity during our parent advisory committee meetings. We usually put up a volleyball set before we start

our meeting and then after we go through our agenda, we have an activity with parents. We, as parents, sometimes like to challenge our high school students and pretty soon we include our young students in our activity. Children also really like to challenge their parents. This has really become a big area of involvement.

Activities for our younger population, such as Head Start, are those where the real serious parent involvement takes place. We have a little youth basketball tournament which is a major fundraising activity for parents.

A lot of our parents get involved in sports events. During basketball games, our community fills the gyms. Even though it might not be in a classroom setting, parents are out participating with their children. When the children see their parents participating in these activities, they feel motivated.

- Instructors and administrators need to be enthusiastic about parental involvement. The White Mountain Apache had a principal who was chosen principal of the year throughout the United States, and this principal has really encouraged a lot of parents to become involved in school activities.

- When the Heart of the Earth Survival School in Minneapolis had a change in administration, parent involvement was very low. This was a special issue that parents and administrators felt needed to be addressed. They have since implemented changes and their parent involvement has doubled. The school now requires parents to come to the school for at least one of their special events. We utilize traditional practices such as feasts where we have presentations by our drum and dance club. Parents sign in to show they are present, and our lunch room gets very crowded. This helps build the trust level because parents come to the school and feel comfortable and welcome. They are not just there because their child is in trouble or because there is a problem--they come on a good note.

Another thing we do in our school is to utilize traditional counseling or sweatlodges. We are located in the middle of the city, but have a sweatlodge that is only ten miles away from our school. We hold them on Friday nights, and the parents who are trying to overcome any kind of drug or alcohol problem are able to attend. They attend as a family with their children, and with their children's friends and families. They can go to a sweat and learn about their own culture and practices.

Other tactics we use to encourage parent involvement include a schoolwide parent newsletter that the teachers can contribute to, and some of the teachers developed their own newsletters such as the first grade parent newsletter. There is a lot of parent-teacher interaction because of open houses and feasts, and the parents are welcome to see the classrooms and interact with the teachers. Another thing that we do is provide transportation. If there is a problem with a student or if there is going to be a recognition of the student, we provide transportation for that parent. We have also developed a parent involvement coordinator whose number one job, goal, and objective is to retain and increase parental involvement.

Another component that has worked for us is the State of Minnesota Act 295, which requires a preassessment team be established for chemical dependency. Parental involvement is encouraged in any recommendation that is made for addressing a student's particular problem. If the problem requires treatment, the parent has to be involved. We keep in close contact with the student and parents and track the students's progress. If a student is sent for out-patient treatment, we require a parent conference before he or she is allowed back into the school.

We also utilize parents in the decisionmaking process. Our board is parent controlled, and the parent advisory committee plays a very important role in the decisionmaking process at this school.

- "Preparing for the Drug Free Years" is probably one of the best parent support programs that I've come across. This program not only deals with how parents can anticipate the problems that their children are going to have around drugs and alcohol, but it also focuses on what they can do within the family structure to build support, create the needed bonding, and encourage the specific skills it takes to say no to drugs.

- At the White River Unified School District (AZ), we have a parent/teacher counselor who goes out and visits with the people in the community. We have young girls who got pregnant before they were out of high school and find it very difficult to go back and walk the halls that they walked maybe a year or two ago. When they go back, they think that they made a mistake and realize that their parents made the same mistake. You have to talk to them. We also have very concerned teachers who during the summertime will go out on their own and visit the children that they will have the following year. Our parent advisory committee holds potlucks as another method to bring parents out.

- I am a certified drug counselor and currently a parenting specialist with the Chinle public schools (AZ) which is the largest public school system on the Navajo reservation. I set up an in-house referral system within the school and made a referral form for teachers to identify students who have behavioral problems, who might be undernourished, who are wearing the same clothes for three days, or who are suspect of being abused or neglected. From the teacher, the students go through the principal or the nurse who does a lot of physical investigation, and then I provide individual counseling and make assessments on these students. As a parenting specialist, I then go out to the home to gather information. Sometimes I find the parents are drunk, divorced, dysfunctional, or even deceased. I then call a case conference with the school social workers and we develop a treatment method. A lot of the cases in Chinle schools involve alcoholic parents, child abuse, or neglect. Other schools might create a similar parenting specialist position to deal with these parents.

- I have noticed that there is a lot of negativism and blaming the teacher, the parents, or the administrators, but I feel that we can change if we all work together and have direction from up above. On the Navajo reservation, I know parents and leaders are telling the reservation schools that they have to integrate the Native language and culture into the curriculum, but this also requires direction from the administrators. The administrators need to tell teachers that this must be part of their curriculum because it gives students a better idea of who they are so they won't feel ostracized and negative about themselves. A lot of student problems

are related to self-esteem. At our school at Fort Defiance (AZ) we have a district parent committee that includes parents from elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as teachers and administrators. Gradually, we are working together to build up our parental involvement. We have a community liaison person who goes with teachers or administrators to meetings. We try to make them feel welcome. Even though I am a teacher and working with the school district, I, as a parent, still feel very, very low. We're trying to change that image there so we will be more humanistic.

Parent Initiated Efforts

- I got involved on the Flathead Reservation because my son was getting negative feedback about our last name from other Natives as well as from the non-Indians. I found out that there were some other parents in the same situation, and so we went in and talked to the school. Prior to this time, there was a standstill in the Native American studies. So the parents in our community got together, got the ball rolling again, and now we have implemented a Native American studies program on a trial basis from the sophomore to the senior level in high school. There are two different tribes represented in the school, the Salish and Kootenai, so we worked with Elders from both tribes. The Native American studies program is successful because of the help from the Elders. Every classroom setting was developed from the Elders' points of view, suggestions, and advice. We are in the process of getting a bilingual grant for grades K through 12, and we don't do anything without the Elders' words and through the settings of the sweatlodge.

- Last winter we were told that our JOM parent committee was going to be removed from the school because it was administratively burdensome to the school system. In response, our parents incorporated the committee, and so our parents now run their own JOM parent committee. About 30 percent of our parents are single parents, and a small number of our students are raised by grandparents. We don't have a lot of parent participation with the JOM program, but we do have a lot of support from parents as far as letting us know what they and their kids need. One program that we provided through the JOM was a parenting skills class that had a very positive response. That class not only motivated many of our committee members, but it also motivated many of our parents to be continually involved in sports and academic activities. We have a low dropout rate in our school, and although most of our students are mainstreamed into the white culture because it is a suburban school, they seem to excel in many ways including both academics and sports. Some have even gone out to reach into the cultural aspects of the Native American community.

- Heart Butte (MT) used to serve just K through 8, but now they have a high school due to parental involvement because parents wanted to stop their kids from going to an off-reservation school where there was a lot of racism.

Regional Efforts

- We need to build better links between tribes and school systems, particularly where public school districts are involved and tribes have not been given their rightful role to provide meaningful input in the school system. One of the methods used by the New Mexico Center for Excellence in Indian Education is to utilize traditional systems that are already in place.

The Center has tried to form a planning committee that is representative of the systems that tribes have already begun to establish to encouraged parental involvement such as participation in expenditure of 874--Impact Aid--funds and Title V (Indian Education Act) committees. However, we still need to encourage these committees to reach out to the grassroots level and involve even more parents.

V. Other Issues and Concerns

Racism

- I come from a tribe that has two public schools within a seven-mile radius on each side. Why do we need a tribal school when we are so close to public schools? It is because we suffer a lot of racism in the State of Washington.

- Our kids going into ninth grade at the high school are facing institutionalized racism and cultural insensitivity. This is especially true in areas where there is competition between the non-Indian and the Indian communities for a treaty resource, such as in the Pacific Northwest where the tribes are fishing tribes. Some of the teachers are commercial fishermen themselves, and thus there is a lot of antagonism because they are competing during the summer months for money.

- Students face blatant racism in their classes. In one district in Northwest Washington, high school students were required to take a class in Pacific Northwest history. Because teachers could use supplementary materials that did not have to be reviewed by a curriculum board, some teachers were using materials that were extremely racist and sexist. One unit called "Mountain Men and Their Women" talked about Indian fathers selling their daughters in rendezvous with the mountain men in return for a new rifle or a horse. The young girls supposedly agreed to this because of their low status as women. The students in this class were required to give corresponding answers on tests despite the inaccuracies and bias of the lessons. Similarly, one teacher showed a movie and clapped every time an Indian got killed.

  This school imposed an attendance policy that was extremely punitive. If a student missed ten days of school within a semester, he or she had to petition for academic credit for that semester, regardless of academic standing. The school does not consider whether you might be sick, attending ceremonials, or helping your family fish.

Native Culture and Language

- It would be very nice to think that the teaching of culture could occur at home, but that's not always the case. A lot of our traditional language and culture is being lost right now and it can't be taught in the home. That is why we reinforce it at school.

- We need instruction in our Native languages and in the traditional culture. We need to put this together with the white ways so our kids will understand both traditional and white ways.

- We need to bridge the gap between institutions and the communities' need to inform and perpetuate themselves. We keep discussing the need to integrate language and culture into schools. This appears to be a viable suggestion in order to make the school systems part of Indian communities or part of any community that they are operating in. Schools would be relevant to the population that they are supposed to be educating and this would make the institution part of the community with which they are working.

- Native American Indian languages and history are not taught at the high school, and in fact, they are shunned. The only time that Native Americans are recognized is on Columbus Day or one day out of the school year when they have Native American Indian Day. Sometimes schools forget to send memos out and kids don't know what day that was.

- The BIA is supposed to allow BIA schools to teach Navajo language and culture, but they don't. The BIA needs to be pressured to allow more money for Native American studies, or they must at least tell the schools that they can teach this. We're having problems at one of the schools where there is no time during the school day for teaching Navajo language and culture, and so this is usually done at the dormitory maybe once a week.

- I am concerned about losing our culture and traditions. I feel that I am one of the last generations on our reservation to be fully fluent in our language and also to practice our culture and our traditions. I teach language and culture at the University of Minnesota at Duluth and I have taught Indian philosophy at other colleges, but I don't seem to get that much involvement from our people. We offer continuing education extension classes on the reservation in language, culture, and history, but few people are involved. It is easy for parents to learn how to play bingo and this is where time is spent on the reservation. I would like to see our children learn something other than this; I would like to see them learn the language. Our reservation has two sectors to it. One sector has between 50 and 75 people living there, and I have an enrollment of 17 people including Elders and youngsters. The other part of the reservation houses 300 people, but only 12 are enrolled in the class. I cannot get these people involved because there are not many full-blooded people left--they are all intermixed. But one hates to see the tradition, culture, and language go down the drain.

<u>Native American Teachers and Staff</u>

- I am a parent of six children and have dealt with the public school system for 24 years. I have taught my children to respect all people, like I was taught by my grandmother. But I have learned that the school system does not understand American Indian children or their culture. I believe the school system needs to have respect for American Indian children. When I sent my children to school they were feeling good about themselves, their culture, and their heritage, but they came home feeling inferior about themselves and full of questions about our value system. I believe we need to hire American Indian teachers because they understand American Indian culture, and preferably we should hire local Indian teachers from each area.

- It's crucial that we hire Native American teachers. At Fort Defiance our Native American enrollment is about 90 percent, and our teaching staff is about 75 percent Native American. We try hard to incorporate the language by talking Navajo or the Native language to the

people. A lot of times the teachers and the administrators go into the community to participate in powwows or gatherings to show the people that even though they may put themselves above others sometimes, they are still people. I myself go to squaw dances and yeibechei dances, and I see parents and students there. We try to communicate and bridge the gap through cultural activities.

- I'd like NIEA and this Task Force to stress the need for public school Native American Indians to serve on school boards. I'm really concerned about Northern Arizona because we don't have any Native American Indians on any of the school boards.

Funding

- We need more teachers, teacher's aides, and liaisons to help increase the educational opportunities for our children, but we are dependent on the funding of the federal government.

- School districts that receive Impact Aid should have a board of Indian education commissioners comprised of parents, school district employees, and tribal representatives to address problems or improvements that need to be made. This board should have clout with the federal government to make recommendations for sanctions against school districts so that districts can't get Impact Aid unless they respond to the needs of our students.

- When administrations make funding cuts, the paperwork tends to build up. Sometimes it costs schools more to file for $10 than to file for $100, which jeopardizes smaller school districts. As larger school districts, we need to protect these smaller districts, because if you get rid of the smaller districts, you'll be coming after us. I guess we need to form a line of defense.

Health, Wellness, and Substance Abuse Prevention

- Our tribal council passed a resolution stating that our tribe would be alcohol and drug free within the next year or two. Consequently, there has been a lot of study on the addictive and dysfunctional communities and families. We discovered that even if you don't drink now, you may have inherited dysfunctional behaviors, and this is one of the reasons that we as adults can't help our children. I think that federal agencies have to better coordinate the programs and the resources that we have to educate our tribal leaders and parent committees because then this information will filter down to the communities.

- I feel that positive reinforcement of accomplishments is very important. When working with a child who accomplishes something, give him or her a hug and you will see positive results. When Native American people get discouraged, it tends to push them away from thinking that they can accomplish something, even if the task is simple. It seems like a lot of expectations are put upon the youth. If they are not receiving positive reinforcement, and if you get disappointed and lose patience because they don't do something right, they may become discouraged about doing their work or performing to their highest capabilities.

- Our students from the Navajo reservation have to be bused to the high schools. Certain things develop from these bus rides causing problems with absenteeism, alcoholism, and peer pressure. We've talked about these problems with the public school, but we're not heard. I think there needs to be a bigger organization, such as NIEA, to put pressure on public schools.

Trust Responsibilities

- We hear the BIA and parts of ED say one thing and do another. We feel that we have lost trust. We have to keep our eyes on them all of the time and this is wrong. They are supposed to be in charge of a trust responsibility that the United States government had signed a long time ago, and we'd like to see that honored.

Issues Concerning INAR Task Force

- A concern about the membership of the Task Force was expressed and INAR Co-Chair Terrell Bell, speaking only of his appointment to the Task Force, explained that Secretary of Education, Lauro Cavazos, asked him to serve on it. Dr. Bell had felt that the Task Force should be comprised only of Native Americans, but Cavazos insisted he could help because of his previous experience as U.S. Secretary of Education under President Reagan and because of his role in the release of the "Nation at Risk" report. Each member of the Task Force was appointed by Secretary Cavazos.

- I noticed that no one on the Task Force is from the Northwest. Other than the hearings, how will you relate to problems in the Northwest? Our problems are unique. We don't believe that anybody from the Midwest, Southwest, or the East know our ways of the Northwest. We, the people of the Northwest, cannot and would not represent anybody from the Midwest, Southwest, or the East, because we do not know their ways.

  Dr. Bell explained that he grew up in Idaho, served as superintendent of schools in Wyoming, and is currently living in Salt Lake. William Demmert, from Alaska, is from as far north and west as possible. However, if you define the Northwest as strictly Washington and Oregon, there are no representatives.

- Notice of Task Force hearings and the call for information and papers came out during the summertime when we had no secretarial help and very poor communication with our people whose input we needed in order to answer your questions. We had to conduct a telephone survey to gather our data. Furthermore, it came due the week of the testimony in Seattle, so we had no time to prepare for anyone to testify in Seattle.